

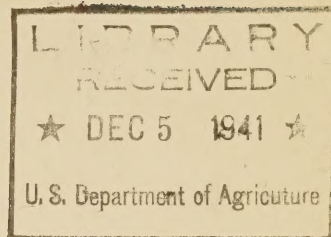
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R E P O R T O F
CENTRAL STATES REGIONAL EXTENSION CONFERENCE

ON RURAL YOUTH



Memorial Union Building

Ames, Iowa

April 28 - 30, 1941.

THEME:

AN EXTENSION PROGRAM FOR RURAL YOUTH

United States Department of Agriculture
Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Recommendations for an extension program for older rural youth.....	1
Policies.....	1
Aims and Objectives.....	1
Program.....	2
Summary report.....	5
Organization of the conference.....	5
The committee.....	6
Needs, interests, opportunities, and responsibilities.....	7
Some characteristics of youth.....	7
Interests of youth.....	8
The education of rural youth.....	9
Job guidance of rural youth.....	10
The problem of rural girls.....	10
A summary program for rural youth.....	11
The function of the Extension Service.....	12
Health problems of rural youth.....	13
Opportunities for a comprehensive extension program for rural youth.....	15
As we go home.....	18

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CENTRAL STATES REGIONAL EXTENSION CONFERENCE
ON RURAL YOUTH*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EXTENSION PROGRAM
FOR OLDER RURAL YOUTH

Policies

1. In line with other policies of the Extension Service, the administrative organization and procedure in extension work with older rural youth should be left to each State. In order to secure greater national unity in the program, national and regional conferences of extension workers should be held. Conferences should be supplemented by additional cooperative research by the land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture and by additional advisory services from the Federal office of the Extension Service.

2. It is the responsibility of all members of the extension staff to assist actively in the development and execution of a program aimed at the solution of the problems of rural youth.

3. We believe it to be of primary importance that sound and properly adapted information on agriculture and home economics be provided by the Extension Service to assist rural youth to develop successful life careers; we also recognize the need of providing opportunities for individual development through group social and recreational experiences.

Aims and Objectives

The major aims of the Extension Service in the rural youth field are: Education, social development, economic growth, and community service.

The objectives in developing these aims should be:

1. To provide continuity in the educational activities of the Extension Service for rural people.
2. To stimulate youth to acquire desirable skills and knowledge in the art of farming, homemaking, and other vocations; and to help youth improve their standard of living.
3. To encourage appreciation of cultural values and to foster opportunities that tend to aid the social development of rural youth.

* Held at Ames, Iowa, April 28-30, 1941.

4. To emphasize the importance of youth participation in community service and activities.
5. To enlist the cooperation of and to cooperate with public and private agencies whose aims are consistent with these aims and objectives.

Program

1. The field of rural youth is interpreted to include a situation group, primarily rural, out-of-school, and with interests between 4-H and mature adults.

2. The local unit of organization will depend upon the local situation. It may be a county group, a community group, a special interest group or any combination thereof.

3. The Rural Youth Program should -

- a. Be coordinated within the Extension Service staff as a whole.
- b. Be coordinated with other organized groups and youth-serving agencies.
- c. Be an integral part of the whole extension program beginning with 4-H Club interests and extending through mature adult interests.
- d. Run throughout the entire year and include educational, social, recreational, and service activities.
- e. Provide for maximum determination and participation by youth themselves.

4. Surveys and studies, made as far as possible with the assistance of young folk, should be encouraged. The reports should be written in a simple, understandable form and used as a basis for planning programs and activities. Surveys might well include personal and group interests, job opportunities, and facilities available.

5. There is need for vocational counseling. The responsibility of the Agricultural Extension Service for vocational counseling and training for rural youth should include the following:

- a. Stimulation of development of effective aids in determining the interests, attitudes, aptitudes, abilities, and capacities for success in the field of agriculture and home economics.
- b. Extension and adaptation of the resources of the Agricultural Extension Service to provide educational experiences which will assist young people to appreciate farm life and to develop their abilities and skills in agriculture and homemaking.

- c. Development of a rural youth program which will provide experiences (such as discussions, readings, tours, personal contacts, etc.).
- d. Active cooperation with other agencies in development of more adequate counseling and placement service for rural young people and encouragement for the young people to use all available guidance and placement facilities.

6. Subject matter in agriculture and home economics should be adapted to the needs of rural youth and made a part of their programs as interests are developed and circumstances permit.

Particular attention should be given to developing such areas of interest as farm and home planning, personal development, family relationships, community relationships, foods, nutrition and health, conservation of human and natural resources, farm financing, and government.

7. Citizenship and Democracy. - The United States is founded upon the principles of freedom of living, of speech, and of the press; of each citizen having a voice in determining who shall govern and how they shall govern; and of freedom to worship in accordance with one's own conscience. These are the fundamental principles of democracy which the people of this Nation will preserve at all costs.

A program designed to build men and women to live confidently and courageously is a prime essential to the preservation of that democracy. Therefore, the Extension Service in its work with rural youth must endeavor to give an understanding of and practice in democracy, a reverence for righteousness, and a proper recognition of the responsibilities of the individual as a good citizen.

8. Foods, and Nutrition and Health. - Statistics prove that farm families are lacking in adequate nutrition to insure their health and well-being. They are handicapped by a lack of dental, medical, and hospital facilities.

The Extension Service program with rural youth should -

- a. Develop an understanding and appreciation of the relationship of nutrition to physical and mental health.
- b. Stimulate a positive attitude toward health improvement programs, and the establishment of well-recognized health habits, including periodic health examinations and adequate dental and eye care.
- c. Encourage the study of community health problems and the cooperation with public health agencies and other services in their solution.

9. Emergency Adjustments. - Youth is a period of adjustment. In addition to the normal adjustments peculiar to youth are those growing out of the present emergency. These may vary from those adjustments made necessary to enable young men to devote 1 year to military training, and the gradual absorption of moderate numbers of trainees thereafter, to extend military effort and the absorption of large numbers of discharged soldiers into our civilian life.

The best approach to the solution of these problems of grave public importance is actual practice in dealing with local problems of less overpowering significance which face rural youth and rural communities today and not in the unpredictable future. The best insurance that youth will be prepared to meet the problems of the future is for them to have a part in working out the problems of today. They may develop new ways of utilizing their own local resources; they may obtain practice in community cooperation which will demonstrate the power of unified effort; they may be given a voice in organizations and agencies through which education, health, and recreation may be brought to young people and increasingly by young people. They may study broad national problems and international issues, and through confidence gained by the experience of coping successfully with local problems, be in a better position to struggle with the larger issues as they arise. In developing techniques to aid youth in making adjustments to emergency situations as well as those with which they must ordinarily meet, the Extension Service should -

- a. Provide experiences that develop individual responsibility and initiative.
- b. Provide opportunities for jobs and a place in civilian life. Continue, insofar as possible, activities and study that assist in carrying out life careers.
- c. Encourage cooperation in group activities which contribute to individual, family, and community development.
- d. Help youth to avoid fear and worry, and to face changes and crises with poise and confidence. Emphasize the value of mental health in meeting frustrations by doing one's best day by day, with faith in what the future holds.

SUMMARY REPORT

Organization of the Conference

The conference program was opened by Director R. K. Bliss of Iowa, who, in about 15 minutes, obtained from those in attendance a list of 13 specific questions relative to work with rural youth which, it was hoped, would be answered during the conference. These questions helped to motivate discussion, and most of them were answered wholly or in part before the conference adjourned.

The first half day was devoted to situation statements by Dr. H. Y. McClusky, Dr. J. G. Grant, and Dr. H. C. Ramsower. Summaries of their addresses are a part of this report.

Three discussion topics were set up as follows:

1. Occupational Needs, Interests, Opportunities, and Responsibilities.
2. Social Needs, Interests, Opportunities, and Responsibilities.
3. Youth -- A Period of Adjustment.

One-half day was devoted to discussion of each topic. The entire group met together for 45 minutes at the beginning of each half-day session. At this session 12-minute reports relating to the topic under discussion were made by each of 3 States, as follows:

Topic No. 1 -- H. F. Ainsworth, Indiana.
Ruby F. Christianson, Minnesota.
L. L. Colvis, Illinois.

Topic No. 2 -- Pearl E. Converse, Iowa.
A. F. Wileden, Wisconsin.
M. H. Coe, Kansas.

Topic No. 3 -- Blanche E. Hedrick, Wisconsin.
Pauline Reynolds, N. Dakota.
R. S. Clough, Missouri.

After this presentation, the conference then divided into 3 sections of about 20 persons each, by counting off by threes. Each section had a secretary and Chairman whose only instructions were to convene and adjourn promptly and to keep the discussion within the boundaries of the topic. The secretaries were to report the sectional discussions at the general session which reassembled after 1 hour of discussion in the sectional sessions.

In advance of the conference a committee was appointed to evaluate the discussion during the first 2 days and propose to the conference at the last half-day session, an extension program for rural youth in the Central States. This committee was made up of representatives of the following extension groups with Director H. C. Ramsower of Ohio as chairman.

The Committee

H. C. Ramsower	Director of Extension	Ohio
Pauline M. Reynolds	Extension Agent for Rural Youth	North Dakota
R. C. Clark	Rural Youth Specialist	Iowa
Olga Bird	Assistant State Club Leader	Michigan
Mrs. Ethel R. Bowen	Assistant State Home Demonstration Leader	Nebraska
C. V. Ballard	State County Agent Leader	Michigan
Blanche E. Hedrick	Child Development and Family Relationship Specialist	Wisconsin
J. B. Cunningham	Extension Agricultural Economist	Illinois
Fannie A. Gannon	Extension Specialist, Home Management	Iowa
Walter Tolman	Extension Specialist in Animal Husbandry	Nebraska
W. U. Rusk	Agricultural Agent, Blackford County	Indiana
Ann Nygaard	Home Demonstration Agent, Benton County	Iowa
D. F. Rehl	Assistant Agricultural Agent, Ross County	Ohio

The report of this committee is attached.

The conference was closed by a brief inspirational address by the Assistant Director Reuben Brigham.

Those attending the conference included extension directors or assistant directors, and rural youth workers from each of the 12 Central States; 4-H Club workers from most of the States; and county agent leaders, home demonstration agent leaders, county agents, home demonstration agents, 4-H Club agents, and specialists in animal husbandry, child development and family relationships, rural sociology, agricultural economics, and home management from a few States.

NEEDS, INTERESTS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Howard Y. McClusky
Associate Director
American Youth Commission

Because I am appearing early in the conference I hope to make my remarks exploratory and introductory in character. I am going to assume that we are concerned with the whole problem of rural youth; that we are interested in rural boys and girls, in youth who remain on the farm and those who migrate to the city, and in matching all phases of rural life (including productive agriculture) to the needs of young people.

Some Characteristics Of Youth

Let us first consider five general characteristics of youth. First, sometime between 12 and 25 youth attain the height of their native capacity to become intelligent. After 25 they may grow in wisdom, acquire greater skill, absorb wider information, and become more intelligent; but as far as the psychologists and neurologists now know, the native capacity to take on these marks of intelligence - inborn brain power - comes to maturity during these years. A youth therefore is about as naturally bright as he will ever be.

Second, at this period young people approach the peak of their physical powers. The heart and lungs increase their function, and growing muscles add new strength. It is true that youth is a period when certain diseases such as tuberculosis and syphilis have a high incidence and that the medical examinations of draft boards reveal a disgraceful number of physical defects. Nevertheless, of all ages youth is the period of lowest mortality and greatest physical exuberance. Whatever the general level of our health, it is more likely to be higher in the late teens and early twenties than at any other time of life.

Third, youth is a time when the differences between the sexes become especially important. Girls mature earlier and at a more rapid rate than boys. At any given year girls are actually older than their brothers of the same chronological age. This fact has a profound bearing on the relation of the sexes to each other and especially emphasizes the importance of a varied social experience for girls in the teens and early twenties because their attractiveness to men rapidly diminishes as they enter the middle and late twenties.

Fourth, youth is characterized by a need for psychological weaning. The early emotional attachment to the family must be supplemented by outside interests and affections, and the dependence of childhood must give way to the responsible interdependence of approaching adulthood. Young people normally want to go ahead under their own power.

Fifth, youth is a period of crisis and transition. It is a time for basic decisions in the selection of a life partner and a job and in the development of a philosophy of life. Because he must live with their consequences, a youth must make these decisions for himself. They are forced on him by the pressure of his biological and psychological development from within, meeting the demands of society from without. This necessity confronting youth contrasts sharply with the less insistent demands of childhood when food, shelter, and clothes are provided by the parents, and society, regarding dependence as normal, expects no basic choices from children.

Interests Of Youth

Many procedures have been employed to study the interests of young people. One method consists of obtaining written responses to selected questions. For example, Miss Melita Hutzel, a special lecturer for the Michigan Department of Public Health, has for years been addressing high-school students on problems of life adjustment. Following her talk she invites the youthful members of her audience to write unsigned statements of topics about which they would like more enlightenment. A classification of thousands of these statements reveal that young people express an interest in the following topics: (1) Relations between boys and girls; (2) physical growth and appearance; (3) etiquette and proper manners; (4) how to get along with brothers and sisters and father and mother; (5) having a home of their own; (6) how to get along with other people; (7) the development of mental health including such traits as self-confidence, poise, cheerfulness, freedom from worry, fear, etc., (8) how to get and hold a job; and (9) religion and life after death.

The preceding inventory of interests requires some interpretation. A written statement of a personal curiosity may not indicate a real need. That is, writing down a concern close to the surface of one's thinking may overlook the existence of needs that are more implicit but just as fundamental. For example, the foregoing topics contain no explicit reference to citizenship, but no one doubts the importance of the civic needs of young people. On the other hand the expressed interests of young people are a valid and rich resource for the formulation of their needs.

Let us examine more carefully one area of need which includes many of the interests listed above and is generally regarded as a major adjustment of life. I refer to the social and recreational adjustment of young people.

Leisure time activities carried on in relative isolation are important and at no age can we avoid the need for their healing influence. Hunting, trapping, fishing, gardening, and nature study are all valuable recreational resources in the rural environment and should always be utilized, but the cue to understanding and planning for the recreational life of young people is their need to become acquainted with a variety

of persons of the opposite sex under wholesome auspices which give little attention to the formalities of getting a date as a pre-requisite to taking part in social activities. A healthy development of the romantic interest of young people is more likely to occur when there is ample opportunity for groups of older boys and girls to come together informally to have a wholesome good time. In these social experiences they develop poise and self-confidence. They also learn to size up their associates of the opposite sex, and make the friendships that later lead to engagement and marriage. Young people marry the persons they know, and they can know only the people they have a chance to meet. Propinquity, therefore, has a lot to do with marriage. For example, a recent study shows that 80 percent of the young people in a rural county (Branch) in Michigan who were married between the years 1926-36 were living inside or within 50 miles of the county when they applied for their marriage license.

A rich and varied social life for rural young people takes on greater importance in the light of the preceding discussion. It is important for its value in developing emotional health, but it is even more important as an early stage in the establishment of good homes. For these reasons it is unfortunate, as indicated by the Maryland youth survey and other investigations, that only from 12 to 20 percent of rural youth belong to any organization (outside of a church) meaning that from 80 to 92 percent of rural youth have little or no opportunity for organized social experiences.

The Education Of Rural Youth

In general the educational program for rural youth is very spotty. Many consolidated and one room rural schools are effective, but rural education has serious deficiencies to overcome. In Iowa only 56 percent of the graduates of the one-room rural school go on to the ninth grade. In many counties in the North Central States the percentage is even lower. Moreover country schools, both elementary and secondary, generally tend to overlook the problems and resources of rural life. The appreciation and understanding of nature should receive more attention in literature and general science classes. The economics of farm management should bulk large in the social studies. Home gardens, farm shops, school forests, and projects in soil conservation and nutrition should occupy a major place in the curriculum, and the school should join farm organizations and State and Federal agencies in strengthening an appreciation for the sturdy values of rural life.

Most farm boys and girls get their secondary education in high schools located in towns and cities. In many instances young people from the country constitute from 35 to 60 percent of the student body of the high schools which they attend. But except for an occasional course in vocational agriculture, you could never tell by inspecting the course of studies that the average high school had any concern for the background and problems of the rural youth. In fact most country

youth go to town schools which largely ignore rural problems and rural values, and when we consider the small number of farmers on the boards of town schools, we have virtually a case of "taxation without representation."

A striking example of the failure to consider the educational interests of young people from the country is the manner in which the transfer of the graduate of the one-room rural school to the ninth grade of the village school is handled. Most rural youth begin work in the village ninth grade without any knowledge of their new teachers, their new classmates, or the environment of their new school. We find few cases of village youth acting as a host to rural youth; few pupils from the country school visit the village school in preparation for later transfer; few teachers in village schools draw on the knowledge of rural teachers in understanding the needs of their rural pupils. In fact village, town, and city schools are not noted for their hospitality to the rural youth in their midst.

Job Guidance Of Rural Youth

It is well known that there are not enough farm jobs for all young people in farm families. Many country youth are better fitted for nonrural occupations and should go to the city. Others because of interest and aptitude should remain on the farm. But our knowledge and facilities for counseling both groups are pitifully meagre. The average rural leader in the country knows little about opportunities for farming in his area. He knows less about the kind of boy and girl who can best build up our rural society, and he has equally slight information about the jobs in cities related to agriculture for which migrating farm youth have a superior background. Moreover data about general job opportunities in cities known to the junior division of the employment service is rarely made available to rural leaders for the guidance of country youth who are leaving the farm. To summarize, job guidance for farm youth is practically nonexistent, and what does exist is largely a matter of guesswork.

Both for the sake of the rural youth who will infuse new life into our cities and for the sake of those who remain as the oncoming generation of up-builders of the Nation's land resources, far more adequate and realistic job training and guidance is necessary.

The Problem Of Rural Girls

The fate of rural girls is to some extent tied to that of boys, but is, nevertheless, somewhat different. The older girl is needed less in the household than the boy is on the farm. Because she will accept lower wages, there are more unskilled, temporary jobs waiting for her in the factories, offices, and homes in the city. Moreover, our customs do not encourage girls to seek the company of boys, and the usual isolation of rural life shuts girls off from many social opportunities. It is not

surprising, therefore, that the pull of older girls to the city is very strong, while those who remain on the farm marry earlier and have more babies. It would be misleading to assume that the problems of older rural boys and girls are identical. They overlap and are related, but they require special study and special programs.

A Summary Program For Rural Youth

1. A program for rural youth should be based on the fundamental needs of all young people living on farms - boys and girls, nonmigrant and migrant, from well-to-do and poor families. Procedures must be devised to keep rural leaders sensitive and close to these needs. Rural youth cannot be served from an ivory tower or by the untested preconceptions of professional adult workers who have lost touch with young people because of an absorbing preoccupation with their own special interests.

2. A program for older rural youth should as far as practicable be coeducational in character. The interests and needs of older youth are largely coeducational; furthermore, adult life is for most people intimately and inevitably coeducational, and older youth are approaching adulthood.

3. A program for older rural youth should allow for a maximum amount of self-direction. No solid and permanent service to youth is possible without the leadership and support of adults, but adults habitually underestimate the ability of youth to take responsibility. And young people need to grow into independence. Hence, because it produces superior motivation and personal growth, the greatest possible autonomy should be given to young people in the conduct of their own programs.

4. A program for older rural youth should as far as practicable be based on adult tasks. Social and recreational activities are indispensable for a balanced and attractive program, but older youth are young adults and are ready to roll up their sleeves to attack the fundamental problems of society. They should feel free to undertake the better practices that adults often fail to apply. They should work on projects for nutrition, home gardens, better libraries, enlarged health services, better schools, more competent local government, improved agricultural practices, more active churches, and better recreation. They can have fun in beautifying the grounds of grange halls, schools, and churches and in organizing community festivals. Young people are almost grown up and should be challenged by grown-up jobs.

5. A full program for rural youth should be based on a ruralization of the programs of agencies whose potential contribution to rural life is not yet fully developed, such as schools, libraries, health services, churches, the N.Y.A., W.P.A., Junior Division of the Employment Service, service clubs, veterans' organizations, labor unions, and cooperative societies.

6. A program for older rural youth should be organized primarily at the neighborhood and community level. The community is closer to youth, closer to the family, closer to the church and the school, and nearer to local leadership and resources. Emphasis on the community should not preclude a provision for some type of county, State, and even national organization. Larger systems of affiliation can strengthen community units by a cross-fertilization of good practice and a sense of fellowship in a large enterprise. But if a program for older rural youth is to be realistic, and an attempt is made to include as many young people as possible, as well as to avoid skimming the cream of rural leadership, it must be decentralized and work directly at the grass roots.

The Function Of The Extension Service

Since the community is the logical unit of organization for a program for older youth and since the job is too large for any one agency, the unique function of the Extension Service is that of coordination.

In general the leadership of the Agricultural Extension Service at the county level is more stable, more carefully selected, and the product of more professional training than that of any other agency in rural society. Moreover the Agricultural Extension Service has direct access to vast educational resources through its connection with the land-grant colleges and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, it is concerned with the strengthening of rural life to a greater degree than any other agency. And finally its long experience of coordinating various rural interests at the county level and the expansion of the land use planning program to include the conservation of human as well as material resources, places the Extension Service in a position of important leadership.

In addition to enlarging its direct services to productive agriculture and home management, the Extension Service should take the initiative in mobilizing and coordinating all the agencies related to the rural community in an over-all attack on the problems of older rural youth.

HEALTH PROBLEMS OF RURAL YOUTH

Dr. J. G. Grant
Student Health Service, Iowa State College

It might be a little easier for me to talk about health problems of youth without the rural. In the field of health there are still many problems peculiar to rural youth and rural communities. The distinction between rural and urban communities is less marked since the coming of the automobile, paved roads, and radio. The bases of many of these problems are: (1) Imperfect distribution of medical care, (2) lack of public health facilities in rural areas, and (3) lack of health education.

The Selective Service Law is giving us a wonderful opportunity to find out about the health of our rural youth. So far we find from reports coming in that probably about the same percentage is being rejected as in 1917. However, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. thinks fewer serious diseases are the cause for rejection now than in 1917.

The rural youth are at a disadvantage in regard to medical, nursing, and hospital facilities. The number of doctors in proportion to the number of people is much greater in cities than in rural areas. This is especially true of specialists' services. Financial inability to pay for such services is the cause of this. There is no provision made for health in farm loan cases. The Farm Security Administration states that economic security depends upon health security.

It used to be that rural youth had all the natural advantages in regard to health over urban youth. Modern public health has taken measures such as safeguarding of water supplies, milk ordinances, and intensive immunization programs. One of the reasons why rural areas are behind in public health is the cost of such service. In many places something is being done about it. In Iowa, county and district health units have been set up. These county health units at least in Iowa are subsidized by the Federal Government. At the present time about one-third of the counties in Iowa are working under some such plan. The authority to carry out public health measures is centralized. With a public health unit in the district, much of the epidemic work can be taken care of.

Reasons for people not having a doctor are: (1) Expense involved, (2) they do not want to have a doctor because it is inconvenient to be quarantined. Rural youth receive too little medical attention in the preservation of health and prevention of ill-health. Youth of today are the parents of tomorrow and should know what to do to prevent diseases and defects in their children. A great deal of work is done in the prevention of diseases. Tuberculosis is one specific problem. It is still a leading cause of death, but has been pushed from the top down to the eleventh place. Much can be done to prevent this if the knowledge of service is put into effect. We spend quite a little time here testing students for tuberculosis and X-raying those whose reaction to the test is positive. In 1939-40, 227 colleges where they have no program of T.B.,

and where there are about 200,000 students, 21 active cases were found. In 248 colleges where they had a program with approximately 490,000 students, there were 292 active cases.

Malnutrition is another problem of rural youth. You would think that the people on the farm would have plenty to eat and the right things to eat. They get plenty to eat but apparently lack something in their diet. Maybe they sell too many products to buy less valuable but perhaps more tasty foods. Lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in winter and improper cooking may be the cause of malnutrition.

Dental caries is one of the outstanding physical defects of the youth of today. About 25 percent are rejected because of the condition of their teeth. Rural youth probably suffer from lack of any kind of a program in the school. A great deal of research is being done on dental caries, but there is no answer for it yet.

Industrial hazards are increasing on farms as a result of power machinery. A few diseases that are not especially important attack the rural population particularly. Most cases of typhoid fever, with the exception of those among factory workers, occur in rural districts. Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which is becoming known and increasing all the time in Iowa, is usually found in rural districts.

Health Education: Youth is the time when vitality and health are usually at high tide. Youth is given to pass off any illness they may have. Too many people believe good health is something they just have and which they do not have to do anything to attain because they have always had it. Much can be done toward obtaining good health. One reason for poor health is that there isn't enough health teaching or there is something wrong with health teaching. A great many people do not take advantage of the benefits that are offered in medical science in many fields.

Sex is extremely important in life. Young men and young women are extremely interested in it. Too often they are told it is something that is not talked about. They should be given a chance to have someone who knows what he is talking about tell them frankly, and they should have a chance to ask questions. Mental hygiene is becoming more and more important. There are a great many questions here unsettled and the youth needs help. This time the Selective Service laws are taking into effect the mental side of it. A health problem of rural youth is: (1) Imperfect distribution of medical care, (2) lack of adequate public health facilities in the areas, (3) health education. It is the responsibility of both home and school. The 4-H Club group has done a lot of work in regard to health.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM

FOR RURAL YOUTH

H. C. Ramsower,
Director of Extension, Ohio and
Chairman, Older Rural Youth Committee,
Land-Grant College Association

The extension services of the several States have for many years been concerned with the interests and activities of what we have come to refer to as older rural youth. This term, as generally used, refers to out-of-school rural youth of both sexes who are living at home, usually unmarried, and between the ages of 16 and 25 years. I think we will all agree that an effort thus far has not been very vigorously pushed and in the long run not as effective as we want it to be. Different States are approaching this problem in different ways. That is good. We are here to exchange points of view to the end that each State may be able to strengthen its present program in this important area. There are a few fundamental facts that should be kept in mind:

1. Youth in the upper teen age and in the lower twenties are found in every rural community.
2. They are made up of both sexes in about equal numbers.
3. Roughly half of these young people will soon leave their home communities and go to urban centers. An increasingly smaller number will engage in the business of farming.
4. The number of part-time will, in many communities, increase.
5. In the months and years just ahead large numbers, especially of the young men, will be called to military service or will be employed in defense industry.
6. Looking ahead, many of those who are leaving now will return after the defense program is ended.
7. They constitute a rapidly changing group in any community.
8. In too large a sense so far as our extension programs go, this is the forgotten group. They are an in-between group, between 4-H Club work and adult activity. Too often, also, they are not a part of any local group or organization.

Some of the implications of these and other facts for an extension program may be stated as follows:

1. Programs for this group must be of a broad, general character and must provide large opportunity for individual development and group activity. At least half of the members of any representative rural group have their

eyes turned away from the farm. They will not remain on the farm. However, as long as they remain at home it is our responsibility to help them provide opportunities for growth.

2. Programs should provide some form of vocational counseling. No doubt this can best be done in cooperation with other groups such as the schools and employment agencies which maintain a guidance service. Interest in building up such a help to this group should receive more of our attention than has been given to it thus far.
3. Programs should provide training in farm, home, and community areas appropriate to this age group and largely directed toward those who will become farmers and farm homemakers.

This is a job for the entire Extension staff, and each member of the staff must be led to recognize in this group a great opportunity to use the subject-matter of his area to train leaders and to make genuine contributions to the general development of its members. To this end certain aspects of the job need special attention:

1. The interests of staff members in many areas need to be stimulated. Too many of our specialists feel their jobs begin and end with adult groups. They overlook the older young men and women. It is the task of each member to help interest this group, to help bring them into study and play groups, and then serve them faithfully.
2. Perhaps in some instances our staffs are not properly balanced to meet the needs of this group. Undoubtedly these young people want to devote much of their time in their groups to constructive social and recreational activities balanced with as much vocational instruction as they will take. We need more staff members who can bring them together and help them become a strong influence in their communities.
3. Our constant purpose should be that of integrating these young people into the groups which exist in their local communities through which they can render the best service to the community. This means the church, the farm bureau, the grange, the farmers' union, the local literary or debating club, the future farmers, the future homemakers, the numerous extension projects carried on in almost every community.

The Extension Service is peculiarly fitted to render constructive help to this group.

1. Our staff covers the entire range of rural interests. It needs to be strengthened at spots. It needs to be greatly enlarged.

2. Our county extension agents are county-wide leaders and can thus bring these young people into large groups where where their interests are quickened and opportunities for contacts expanded. Likewise, leaders from several counties can be brought together with great good to all concerned.
3. Ours is an educational approach with the interests of the whole boy and girl in mind as compared to the special interests approach of many other groups. Our aim always is to help these young people develop themselves.
4. We are backed by our land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture, with access to the highest sources of knowledge and of methods.
5. Opportunities to assist this large section of unattached rural people are indeed numerous and important. Let's do the kind of job we are capable of doing by asking each and every member of our several State and county staffs to give a reasonable measure of his or her time and thought to the interests of this group.

AS WE GO HOME*

Reuben Brigham
Assistant Director of Extension Work

Excerpt from a talk entitled "As We Go Home," delivered at the Central States Regional Extension Conference on Rural Youth at Ames, Iowa, April 30, 1941, by Reuben Brigham, Assistant Director of Extension Work, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

In the summer of 1937, at Cheyenne, Wyo., Vice President Henry A. Wallace, then Secretary of Agriculture, gave us his famous seven objectives of the over-all farm program. These were:

1. Maintain farm buying power.
2. Stabilize the supplies and prices of farm products.
3. Conserve our soil resources.
4. Encourage efficient production.
5. Encourage efficient marketing.
6. Encourage farm ownership.
7. Encourage the maintenance of the family-sized farm, not only as an efficient operating unit, but as the source of manpower and womanpower for our cities as well as our farms.

It is the seventh point that I call to your particular attention. Let me repeat it:

"Encourage the maintenance of the family-sized farm, not only as an efficient operating unit, but as the source of manpower and womanpower for our cities as well as our farms."

This objective, to my mind, affords the foundation for a sound and effective program for older rural youth. Every year, in the United States, we have, at least, 100,000 highly productive farms for which new management must be found. The new management needed may be due to the death or retirement of the owner, the moving of the tenant, or the resignation or discharge of the farm manager. In any case, it is vital that the productivity of the farm be maintained and that it be properly managed. This is important to the owner, to the community, to the county, and to the Nation. Such a farm is an important asset that must not become impaired.

*Only excerpts from the address are given here. For the complete text, see U. S. Dept. Agr. Ext. Serv. Cir. 361, Washington, D. C., June 1941. (Mimeographed.)

On the other hand, we have in the farming counties and communities of each State, and in the Nation, many thousands of young men and women, able and anxious to locate on productive farms and pursue their livelihood there as farmers and rural homemakers. Through these young people, and in no other way, can we attain the seventh objective named by Vice President Wallace, that is:

"Encourage the maintenance of the family-sized farm, not only as an efficient operating unit, but as the source of manpower and womanpower for our cities as well as our farms."

What we want is to get these anxious and able young people onto these productive farms and to have them living and operating and in an environment that will guarantee to their communities and to the Nation an adequate and steady flow of fully equipped and highly trained young men and women from these farms to other farms needing managers and homemakers and to the cities to engage in industrial and business pursuits. Therefore, about the most practical thing we can do for our older rural youth is to see to it that in every community the right people are located on the right farms and are equipped to live and operate under the right environment.

This should not be an effort conducted solely by county extension workers. These workers, rather, should be the vigorous advocates and stimulators of such an effort on the part of all the public-spirited and patriotic men and women of the communities in their respective counties, regardless of whether they are living in the open country or in town. It is an effort so important, so vital to community and national welfare, that all the people of each farming county should be conscious of its vital import and should be enthusiastic in its support.

Let us contrast this democratic method of accomplishing this objective with the method employed by the Nazi leadership in Germanizing rural Europe. Let me recall to you what has happened in Poland since it was conquered by the German armies. Once Poland was under control, the German leadership instituted a rapid but comprehensive appraisal of the conquered country's resources. This included the determination of the most productive agricultural areas. Next, the Polish farmers operating the farms in these areas began to be moved to marginal or submarginal farm areas in Poland or were transported to Germany to provide farm labor needed on German farms, whose manpower had been taken by the German armies. Following this move, around 100,000 German farmers and their families began to be moved to the vacated productive farms of

Poland, and the real program of Germany for the permanent occupancy of Poland had begun. What doubt can there be that this same policy will be followed with respect to the occupancy of the best farming areas of the other countries subjugated by the German armies?

What, then, shall be our policy and our choice? What we must do to make our proposed program for rural older youth practical, effective, and highly vital to the Nation is to start immediately on our own effort to conserve the human and natural resources of our rural communities. This calls for a program that will give to our young men and women the financial opportunity to acquire farms of their own on reasonable terms and to acquire helpful information that will enable them to increase the productiveness of the farms they acquire and to give to their communities and their Nation children, well developed physically, well-trained and well-educated, and imbued with loyalty and enthusiasm for their way of life and for democratic government.

Are we, as extension workers, prepared to accept and make the most of this opportunity? I hope so. This most practical program, in my judgment, supplies a motive for the stimulation and coordination of future extension endeavor that far transcends in its possible influence that of any other one activity in which we are now engaged. It is a job for the whole extension staff to do, and we must have every member of the Extension Service staff of every State enthusiastic and militant in its promotion.

The significance of this important effort to our communities, to the Nation, and to extension work, was forcefully expressed in the closing paragraph of an address made at Birmingham in 1940 by J. W. Bateman, former State Extension Director in Louisiana, who at that time was president of the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers. Mr. Bateman said:

"The wealth and security of this country rest not in skyscrapers and bridges of concrete and steel, nor in the gold reposing in the vaults of our banks, but in the millions of competent, satisfied, self-contained farm families; yes -- educated, well-clothed, well-fed, and healthy, dwelling in the little farm homes that dot the hills and valleys of our great land. The farmer and his family, as an independent, resourceful unit of self-reliant living, is the primary element of a rural society. Here rests the foundation of social and economic stability -- the security of government.

"The hope for the future lies here."

What, I ask you, shall our answer be?

